

Salmonellosis

Fact Sheet

What is Salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is caused by infection with bacteria called *Salmonella*. In Australia, most *Salmonella* infections occur after eating contaminated food or sometimes after contact with another person with the infection.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms occur between 6 - 72 hours (usually 12 - 36 hours) after exposure to *salmonella* and symptoms last 2 - 7 days. Most people recover without treatment however illness is usually worse in the elderly and infants. Symptoms may include **diarrhoea, loss of appetite, stomach cramps, headache, fever, nausea, and vomiting**

In the case of less serious infections there are fewer symptoms- usually only diarrhoea two or three times a day for a couple of days. Most mild types of *salmonella* infection clear up in four to seven days without requiring any treatment other than rest and plenty of fluids. A more severe infection may cause excessive diarrhoea, stomach cramps and general health problems. In such cases treatment with antibiotics may be necessary and a doctor should be consulted.

Dehydration - What is the danger of dehydration?

Frequent diarrhoea and vomiting may drain the body of fluids, salts, and minerals. Dehydration occurs when the patient loses more liquid than they can take in. Cases of dehydration should always be checked by a doctor and can be very dangerous in babies and the elderly. Signs of dehydration are, **dry** mouth and tongue, dark urine, dry chapped skin, lack of or decreased urine output, increased thirst, and weakness.

How did I acquire Rubella?

Salmonella can live in the gut of humans and animals. Food poisoning from salmonella occurs when people ingest the bacteria. This can occur in a few different ways:

- Eating undercooked meat (especially chicken) and raw or undercooked eggs
- Eating cooked or ready to eat food such as vegetables that have come in contact with *Salmonella* bacteria from other raw food.
- People with *Salmonella* food poisoning have bacteria in their faeces. If they do not wash their hands properly after going to the toilet, they can spread the bacteria to surfaces, objects, food and drinks that other people come in contact with.
- Not washing hands after changing the nappy of an infected infant.
- Not washing hands after handling animals and their faeces.

How will my care change whilst in hospital?

- Regular and thorough hand hygiene is one of the most successful ways to prevent the spread of **ALL** infections.
- A sign is placed outside your door to alert hospital staff for the need to use special protective infection control precautions. This sign also alerts visitors of the need to speak with nursing staff prior to entering your room.
- The hospital staff will wear protective apparel such as gloves and a gown when they enter your room.
- You will be allocated a private room with your own en-suite facilities.

Good Hand Hygiene Practices

Hand Hygiene is the most effective way to prevent **ALL** infections. Encourage your family and friends to learn and maintain good hand hygiene practices every day. Please refer to the hand hygiene information in the patient information booklet or hand hygiene leaflet available from the Infection prevention and control team.

During your stay in hospital, you may have seen the staff using an alcohol-based hand rub, as an alternative to soap and water. Alcohol-based hand rubs or gels can be used for hand hygiene as long as your hands are not visibly soiled /dirty. There are a variety of brands on the market and are

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available for purchase at most pharmacies. You may choose to use this type of product at home.

Can I still have visitors?

Yes – you can still have visitors, including pregnant women, infants, and babies. However, we ask that you do not allow your visitors to use the toilet facilities in your room. Public facilities are available throughout the hospital. Please ask the staff for directions. If a friend or relative who wishes to visit has had recent surgery, has an illness, or has a compromised immune system they may wish to contact the Infection Prevention & Control staff or speak with their GP for further advice. To prevent the spread of *Salmonella* the nursing staff will provide education to your visitors about the need to perform hand hygiene before and after they enter your room. We ask that you also encourage your visitors to do this. They can use soap and water at the wall sink in the ward, or alcohol hand rub provided outside your room.

What happens when I go home?

- Once your diarrhoea has stopped the risk of infection is dramatically reduced.
- However, when you return home, it is important for you, your family, and your friends to continue the good hand hygiene practices that you have been taught in hospital every day.
- You should not return to food preparation duties until you are no longer experiencing any diarrhoea.
- It is important that anyone assisting you with close personal care wears gloves if they are going to be in contact with any faeces, urine, wounds, or blood. They must wash their hands well, after removing their gloves and dispose the gloves immediately in the rubbish bin.
- If you have more than one toilet in your home, designate one toilet for yourself and one for all other people until you are no longer experiencing episodes of diarrhoea.

Safe food preparation

- The only effective way to kill salmonella bacteria is with heat. For this reason, it is essential to cook all poultry products thoroughly, until the meat is no longer pink, and the juices run clear.
- Always perform hand hygiene after handling raw meat / poultry and before you touch anything
- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat / poultry and other foods.
- Always clean work surfaces, cutting boards and utensils well with hot soapy water after preparing raw meat /poultry.
- Always store cold foods in the refrigerator until you are ready to cook or serve them. Serve hot food steaming hot, not lukewarm.

Where can I get further information?

Talk to your doctor or the nurses caring for you. If you wish to speak with the Infection Control department, ask your nurse to contact us. Our office hours are 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday. Our contact numbers are:

- Office: (02) 9480 9433
- Office: (02) 9480 9732

Alternatively contact your Local Public Health Unit 1300 066 055.

References

NSW Dept of Health; Communicable Diseases Factsheet – Salmonellosis (1 July 2012)

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Salmonella Information Factsheets (July 21, 2021)

NSW Dept of Health; Infection Prevention and Control Policy PD2017_013

National Health and Medical Research Council; Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (2019)